Years from now when boys and girls will play
Where once the blue-clad poilus fought and died,
A gray-haired grand-père, on his homeward way,
Shall call the little children to his side.

TO THE MARNE—RIVER OF LIBERTY

Then, for the time, they'll cease their frolic gay
While grand père's eyes search back to days of yore,
And he shall tell of that September day
When France, brave France, saved Liberty once more.

GERMANY'S PRIDE FIRST HUMBLED FOUR YEARS AGO

Battle of the Marne Saw Forty Years' Plotting Set at Naught

THREE PHASES IN DEFEAT

Castelnau's Resistance, Maunoury's Turning Movement, Foch's Dive Through Gap Each Essential

Four years ago today began the critical hours of that monstrous invasion of France which the Germans had been planning for 40 covetous years and for which they had been heavily equipping their huge army through three years of secret preparation.

It was their plan—and their quite reasonable expectation—to nullify France with one swift blow before Russia could mobilize, then to turn and destroy Russia before the vast, world-scattered forces of the British Empire could even begin to tell.

What tore that plan to tatters, what saved France and England and America, what spared our civilization from an obliteration as dreadful and complete as if the glacial ice of the Arctic had once more slipped down across the face of the earth, was the outcome of the First Battle of the Marne. It is that battle whose anniversary we observe today, and of which the heartening tale will be told as long as the high-held torch of France illumines the world.

THE GERMAN ADVANTAGE

The Germans entered the Battle of the Marne with all the advantage of the initiative, with all the sustaining exultance that can be born of success unbroken and unprecedented. They entered the battle better trained, better equipped, and above all, far more numerous. Though the French armies were augmented by the valiant British contingent which, under Sir John French, had made the epic retreat from Mons, the Allied forces in France on September 6, 1914, stood with relation to the German host as five stands to something less than eight and more than seven—say seven and a half.

Yet the Germans lost the Battle of the Marne. They lost it because they were Germans, because, in their overwhelming pride, they underestimated the strength of "decadent" France, overreached themselves and, being thorough but plodding thinkers, could not readjust themselves in time.

The French won the Battle of the Marne because they were French, for it took French courage to gamble splendidly as they must gamble who would employ coolly such strategy as Joffre employed. And it took such peculiarly French rapidity of intuition and action as General Foch displayed to detect and rush the gap which, on September 9, appeared in the German line and which lost to Germany the stakes she was playing for.

While the chance France took was the only one that could have saved her from defeat, her game was so hazardous that men's minds, haunted as they had been by impending doom and shocked beyond utterance by the all unfamiliar spectre of universal war, felt then and feel now the presence on that battlefield of the figure of Fate, and, as the tide of battle turned, were brought to their knees in awed, unaccustomed prayer the world around.

THE GERMAN PLAN

The German plan was to sweep down into the Paris basin—path of invaders since time immemorial—and there envelop the French army, encircling it in another Sedan or splitting it in half, with the idea of destroying one part and surrounding the other. The plan was grandiose, but, since the Belgian forts had proved but houses of cards before the new siege guns, it was eminently feasible. Indeed, it came within an ace of working.

The French plan, matured through the long, anxious years when French generals were contemplating the inevitable invasion by a conscienceless and bulkier neighboor, was to pit against the invader, a fraction of the French force, to let that fraction retreat deliberately before the enemy, drawing him on, extending his lines, and then, with an extra army boldly held out for the purpose, to strike him with sudden concentration where his outstrung army was feeblest.

Now it was the essential weakness of the German strategy that they gullibly misread as a helpless and exhausted rout what was really the canny and entirely premeditated retreat of the French from the Sambre to the Marne. The disposition of the French reserves, the ingenious shifting of troops and their assembly at the point of the intended counter-offensive, the calmness of Marshal Joffre's daily orders as they are read now in retrospect, would prove—were proof needed—how intentional was every French move behind the veil of dust and smoke which was all the agonized world could see that first September week.

The Germans ventured on their envelopment of the French left in the happy belief that they had already engaged all the French forces. They did not know that, gathered quietly before Paris, was the unexpected Sixth Army, waiting for them to make just that move under General Maunoury, waiting to strike their unprotected flank, drive in behind them and cut them off.

THE GERMAN ERROR

The Germans, then, in September, 1914, were "misinformed as to the French reserves." Does the phrase sound strangely familiar? Have you heard it lately? Have you read the bewildered speculation of the neutral critics as to where General Foch had been hiding the forces with which he began to strike in July of this year?

It is to the mistaken German assumption that the Allied defense of March, April and May, 1918, had exhausted the Allied reserves that the German military critics now lay the present German disaster. History repeated itself in more ways than one in the Second Battle of the Marne. It is the weakness of a complacent and arrogant people to make just that miscalculation. It is just such pride as this which goeth before a fall. The two defeats the Germans had met along the Marne arose out of the heart of the German character.

In the First Battle of the Marne, a triumphant German army of perhaps 75 divisions was pitted against the Allied Army, largely French, of no more than 51 divisions, on a sickle-shaped battle line 120 miles long. What happened was briefly this. The extreme French right, defending Nancy, though thinly held, resisted with such stubbornness that the Germans mistakenly assumed the bulk of the French forces were tied up there.

This led them to order von Kluck, on their own extreme right, to encircle the French left before Paris, never dreaming that an extra and unaccounted-for French army was waiting to cut in behind them if they did so. The German center, which was pressing furiously in an effort to split the French line, had to lean to the west to help out the sorebesset von Kluck.

THROUGH THE GAP

This maneuver so reinforced von Kluck that his assailants had a hard time of it, but in the leaning process, a hole, a fissure, a gap was caused in the German center.

A part of their line was left bare. It was a little as though the Imperial German Staff had been playing a game of crack the whip with a human whip 120 miles long and, by a slip in the hand-clasp at one link, the end of the whip had broken off. The moment the break occurred—it was the afternoon of September 9—General Foch, commanding the French Ninth Army at the center, drove his brilliant 42nd Division through the gap. That wedge broke the German line, and the rattled army of invaders retreated at full speed to the north, there to dig themselves in and fight out with ever diminishing hopes a war they had hoped and expected to win before the first snowfall.

That retreat yielded up two-thirds of the new-won territory. France was saved. So, in those fateful days from September 5 to September 10 was all that fabric of laws, art, language, customs, and standards, that complex of democratic life which we call civilization.

It is idle to say, as speculative critics do, that it was General Castelnau's resistance before Nancy or General Maunoury's turning movement or General Foch's blow through the gap that won the Battle of the Marne. Each phase drew essential strength from the other two.

THE THREE MAIN PHASES

On a great and intricate battle line, such interplay must be present. It was so in the Second Battle of the Marne. What won it? Will you say it was General Gouraud's resistance in Champagne or General Mangin's attack south of Soissons, which took its cue from that resistance? Neither one nor the other. Both.

Though that 120 miles knew no such luxury as a quiet sector, the battle as a whole can be best understood if you consider, in this order, merely the three main phases, the resistance in Lorraine, the blow struck before Paris and the wedge driven by Foch in the center.

It was on the night of September 5 that the French Armies, retreating toward Paris, like a door swinging back on a hinge at Verdun, received this famous message from Marshal Joffre:

"The hour has come to hold fast at whatever cost and to be killed rather than give way."

And this order:

"At the moment of engaging in a battle on which the safety of our country depends, it is important to recall to all that the moment has passed for looking backward. Every effort should be made to attack and drive the enemy back. A body of soldiers that can advance no further should, at whatever cost, hold the ground taken and die rather than withdraw from it. In the present circumstances, no weakening whatever can be tolerated. I look to each officer and soldier, despite the stiff and heroic fighting of recent days, to do his duty fully even to his last breath. Everything depends on the result tomorrow."

That "tomorrow" was September 6, 1914.

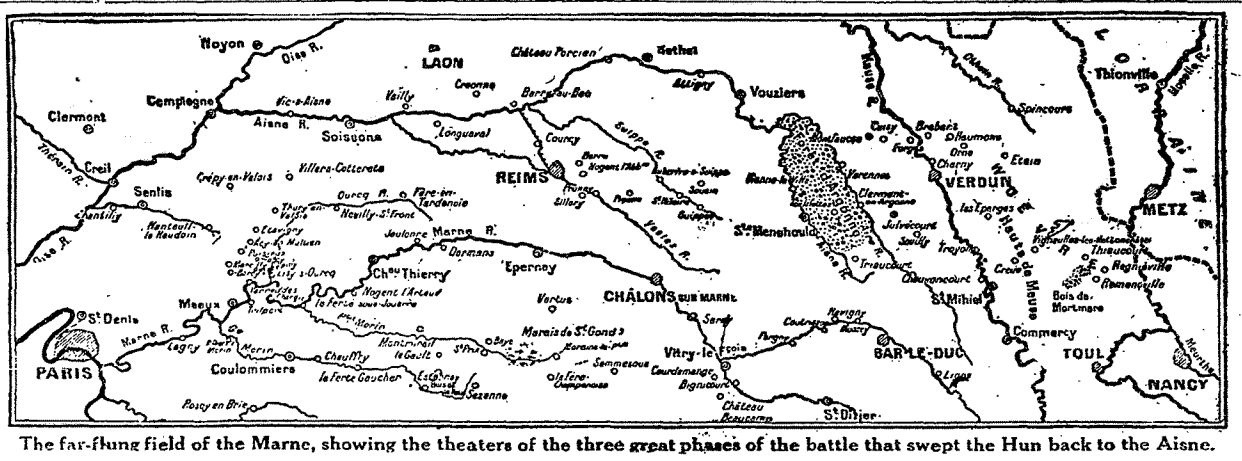
THE BATTLE OF NANCY

The first phase, the foundation of the success scored on September 9, may be said to have begun on August 31, when the Crown Prince's army of no less than eight corps—say a third of a million men—began its fruitless assaults on that chain of wooded hills which the French call the Grand Couronné and which serve as a shield to Nancy.

The Germans wanted to cut across those hills because such a cut would shorten to one-sixth the haul of their supplies then being lugged laboriously around by way of Belgium. They committed so large a fraction of their forces to the task because they had been tricked into believing that there the French were mostly massed. They were going by way of Nancy, because the shorter route by way of Verdun had proved impassable, so quickly had General Sarrail learned the lesson of Liége and Namur and shifted the guns from their fixed posts to movable points around the fortress.

It has been said that General Castelnau met the assault on the Grand Couronné with only five divisions, that the hottest attack was met and repulsed by a single battalion. Certainly the resistance deceived the Germans into believing that even if they could not pass, at least they were pinning in the east enough of the French force to make it safe for von Kluck, 120 miles away, to begin the ambitious development.

The blow at Nancy had almost spent itself when the night of the 5th brought the famous general order and the news that the resistance had served its purpose, that the counter-offensive was ready to begin. The next day, though already the German losses had been appalling, the Kaiser was waiting behind the lines, still hoping for his grand entry into Nancy—the Kaiser, all dressed up and nowhere to go. But that was the end. After one final, furious assault, the attack petered out and the Kaiser went back to Metz.



The far-flung field of the Marne, showing the theaters of the three great phases of the battle that swept the Hun back to the Aisne.

THE BATTLE OF THE OURCQ

The news which sent him back to Metz was the news that von Kluck's army had been struck from behind by an unexpected French force, appearing from nowhere. That blow was the climax of a series of operations that went back to the 2nd of September, Sedan Day of bitter memory. On that day, the German right had reached a position roughly described by the Compiegne-Senlis line, and from there started to swing down behind the Allied left.

By noon of September 5, the mass of von Kluck's forces—three corps at least were south of the Marne. The Allied plan was to have the British contingent engage them there, pin them there, while the French Sixth Army under Maunoury should cut in behind.

This Sixth Army, then fully four divisions in strength and due to increase to eight by rapidly arriving reinforcements, was all for an immediate blow. The British advised a delay of 24 hours as necessary. There will always be divergent views as to whether the French moved too quickly, the English too slowly. At all events, the French struck hard at noon on September 5, and von Kluck was able to bring back his forces to meet them.

Thought the British joined in, though General d'Amade from Paris reinforced General Maunoury with his famous line of a thousand taxis, the movement was threatened with failure in itself.

But it served its purpose in the ensemble of the battle. It compelled the startled von Kluck to call to the east for reinforcements, the draft on the German line weakened its center and opened there the gap which was its undoing. When the French forces, after a day of furious and critical fighting on the 9th, faced the enemy at dawn on the 10th, they found the enemy in full retreat. Fifty miles to the east, General Foch had driven through.

LA FERE CHAMPENOISE

He had driven through in what is sometimes called the battle of La Fère Champenoise, conquered on the 10th, and serving as French headquarters before the 10th was over. General Foch commanded the French center in the retreat from Charleroi, and he possessed a numerically inferior force of no more than three corps to oppose the Saxon army and the Prussian Guards. When news came from the west that something had gone amiss with von Kluck's turning movement, the German center, beginning on the 6th, made one furious effort to smash through the French center, and you must picture General Foch as slowly giving way while he waited for some chance, a ghost of a chance, to seize the counter-offensive.

"Since they are smashing us with such fury, it must be because their business is going badly elsewhere," he reported cheerfully, "and they are trying to make up for it."

It was on the afternoon of that critical September 9—a day of unforgettable heat and strain—that his chance came, that he saw the gap which had clumsily yawned in the line of the famous Guards. He saw and struck.

"They have smashed in my left; they have smashed in my right; in the center it is I who am doing the smashing."

So ran his famous report to his chief. So, on that September 9, was struck the swift, stupefying blow that forced the whole German retreat and destroyed utterly the German plan which, a fortnight before, had seemed so certain of success.

OUR FLAG

The Star-Spangled Banner
Is more than a flag
With its colors of heavenly hue.
The White is God's Light,
Which lends us aright,
While the Red is the blood
From the hearts of the brave:
The Stripes, the straight path
That our boys marched to save
Our mothers and sweethearts and You.
And the Stars, the bright diadem
Crowning the True,
As their spirits float on
In the depths of the Blue.

We wonder what variety of strategic retreat it will be when the Hun finally drops back to Berlin?

EXCEPT THE COSTUME

Scotty—kilt and all—was getting an eyeful of the big movement that goes on every Sunday at a certain great French railroad station.

"Hello, Scotty," said a big, smiling doughboy, as he gripped the plaid one's hand; "you from the Highlands?"

Yes," said Scotty, "Highland Park, Detroit."